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EPIS 26

SHAH WANTS REMOVAL OF U.S., SOVIET MILITARY PRESENCE FROM GULF

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(GAVIN YOUNG DISPATCH FROM TEHERAN: "SHAH WANTS BIG POWERS OUT OF GULF")

(TEXT) THE SHAH OF IRAN, UP TO NOW AMERICA'S STRONGEST ALLY IN THE OIL LANDS OF THE GULF, WANTS ANY AMERICAN MILITARY PRESENCE REMOVED FROM THE AREA. THIS INCLUDES ANY AMERICAN NAVAL, AIR OR MILITARY FACILITY IN BAHRAIN.

AT THE SAME TIME, THE SHAH TOLD ME THAT HE EXPECTED HIS NEW ALLY, IRAQ--GENERALLY, THOUGH WRONGLY, CONSIDERED BY AMERICAN MIDDLE EAST EXPERTS AS A SOVIET 'SLAVE'--TO AGREE TO SIMILAR EXCLUSION OF SOVIET BASES IN THE GULF.

THIS COOPERATION IN AN UNPRECEDENTED COMING TOGETHER OF IRAN AND IRAQ, THE MOST IMPORTANT MILITARY STATES IN THE MOST IMPORTANT OIL REGION OF THE WORLD, WAS CEMENTED DURING THE VISITED TO TEHERAN LAST WEEK OF IRAQ'S STRONG MAN, SADDAM HUSAYN. IF IRAN AND IRAQ'S NEW FRIENDSHIP HOLDS, THE FACE OF THE MIDDLE EAST COULD BE CHANGED.

IN HIS HILLSIDE PALACE OUTSIDE TEHERAN, THE SHAH SITS BOLT UPRIGHT IN A LARGE OFFICE SHIMMERING WITH ANGLED MIRRORS, A SMALL, SLIM, DAPPER MAN IN HIS FIFTIES. HIS VOICE IS SOFT; HE SELDOM GESTURES. HE ANSWERED QUESTIONS ABOUT POSSIBLE POINTS OF DISPUTE BETWEEN IRAN AND IRAQ BRIEFLY AND TO THE POINT.

IRAQ'S CLAIM ON KUWAIT? "KUWAIT CAN BE THE FINLAND OF THE AREA."

THE OMANI WAR THAT INVOLVES IRANIAN TROOPS (AND THE BRITISH) AGAINST LEFT-WING ARAB GUERRILLAS PARTLY SUPPORTED BY IRAQ? "WE DIDN'T EVEN MENTION THAT. LOCAL DIFFERENCE CAN BE SOLVED BETWEEN THE GULF STATES THEMSELVES."

TALKING ABOUT THE SUPER-POWERS' PRESENCE IN THE GULF, THE SHAH SAID TO ME: "WE BOTH WANT TO KEEP THIRD PARTIES OUT."

HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT HE WOULD FAVOR SOME SORT OF COUNCIL, OR CONFERENCE, OF GULF STATES TO COPE WITH LOCAL PROBLEMS OF WHATEVER KIND. "BUT," HE ADDED, "I WOULD RATHER THE SUGGESTION CAME FROM SOMEONE ELSE."

IT WILL PROBABLY COME FROM SADDAM HUSAYN, WHO IS THE EFFECTIVE LEADER OF BA'ATH SOCIALIST IRAQ AND ITS VICE-PRESIDENT.

AT ANY RATE THERE IS NO DOUBT OF THE INTENSIFY OF THE IRANIAN FEELING THAT SUPER-POWERS FROM EAST OR WEST ARE A MENACE IN THE AREA. IMMEDIATELY AFTER MY TALK WITH THE SHAH, HIS PRIME MINISTER, MR MOUEYDA, IN ANOTHER PLACE IN TEHERAN, WAVED HIS PIPE-STEM AT ME, SAYING: "WE SHOULDN'T HAVE THIRD PARTIES COMING IN."

AND THE POINT ABOUT THE RAKED WAT STOPPED YET AGAIN  
IN A CONVERSATION WITH THE SHAH, WHOSE HAWK-LIKE FACE IS TO BE SEEN AT THE  
MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR, WHOSE HAWK-LIKE FACE IS TO BE SEEN AT THE  
SHAH'S SIDE AT GATHERINGS OF THE OIL-PRODUCING COUNTRIES' 'UNION'--  
OPEC. HE SAID: 'HIS MAJESTY WANTS ALL BASES REMOVED.'

THE SHAH HIMSELF FEELS THAT HE IS A SORT OF GENDARM OF THE GULF  
AREA. NOW HE IS FORCING THIS WEEK JUST BEFORE SADDAM HUSAYN  
ARRIVED AND JUST AFTER PRESIDENT AS-SADAT OF EGYPT AND PRESIDENT  
DAUD OF AFGHANISTAN HAD LEFT.

THIS DOES NOT MEAN THE SHAH IS TURNING ANTI-AMERICAN. HE IS EVEN  
NOW AWAITING THE DELIVERY OF 60 GRUMMAN TONCAIS;  
141 TIGER FF-5 FIGHTERS ARE EXPECTED AS WELL.

IT IS SIMPLY THAT THE SHAH IS PRO-IRAN AND FAVORS A QUIET TIME  
IN THE AREA. HE HAS REITERATED TO BOTH KING KHALID AND SADDAM  
HUSAYN THAT HE AGREES WITH THEM THAT ISRAEL MUST WITHDRAW FROM  
OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORIES, INCLUDING JERUSALEM.

THE SHAH, WHO THESE DAYS IS MOVING ABOUT THE MIDDLE EASTERN  
WORLD LIKE A REGAL, CONFIDENT AND POWERFUL KENNY KISSINGER, IS  
OBVIOUSLY INTENT ON EMBRACING EVEN SOCIALIST ARABS. HE WANTS TO  
DEFUSE THE GULF REGION WHERE, IT IS NOT TOO DRAMATIC TO SAY, AN  
EAST-WEST WAR COULD SUDDENLY FLASH INTO LIFE.

THIS DANGER OF WAR STEMS FROM THE BIZARRELY MASSIVE ARMS  
BUILD-UP THAT AMERICA SET IN TRAIN A FEW YEARS AGO BY CRAMMING  
BILLIONS OF DOLLARS-WORTH OF THE MOST MODERN WEAPONRY INTO IRAN  
AND THE BACKWARD EMIRATES OF THE ARAB SIDE OF THE GULF, THUS RISKING  
A VIOLENT FLARE-UP WITH SOVIET-ARMED AND SOCIALIST--THOUGH NOT  
COMMUNIST--IRAN. IT LIES ALSO IN THE NEAR CERTAINTY THAT, IN THE  
NEXT ARAB-ISRAELI WAR (WHICH MANY SEE AS INEVITABLE), THE ARAB  
STATES WILL CUT OFF AMERICA'S OIL AGAIN. THERE HAVE BEEN GROWLS  
FROM WASHINGTON THAT IF THIS HAPPENS THE U.S. MARINES MIGHT BE  
LANDED TO GRAB THE OIL WELLS.

TO THIS SORT OF SABRE-RATTLING, MR. HOVEYDA, THE SHAH'S PRIME  
MINISTER (AND THEREFORE ABOUT AS FAR REMOVED FROM EXTREME LEFT-WING,  
ANTI-WEST THOUGHT AS CAN BE IMAGINED), HAD A VERY FORTHRIGHT REPLY.  
HIS SMILE LEFT HIS FACE, HE SAT UP IN HIS CHAIR AND AGAIN THE PIPE  
POINTED AT ME LIKE A MINIATURE PISTOL. 'I DON'T TAKE ANY NOTICE OF  
SUCH RUBBISH. CAN YOU IMAGE IT?' HE SAID. 'WHICH OIL WELLS WILL  
THOSE MARINES GRAB? WHERE? HOW MANY MILLIONS OF SOLDIERS  
WILL IT TAKE? AND ALL THAT AFTER VIETNAM....?'

THUS, LOOSE TALK OF LANADING THE MARINES ALSO EMBARRASSES AND,  
POSSIBLY, LOSES FRIENDS AND ALLIES LIKE THE SHAH AND THE  
WEST-LEANING GULF RULERS. AND THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THE  
SHAH--WHATEVER ONE MAY THINK OF HIS DOMESTIC POLICIES--HAS EMERGED,  
ON THE MIDDLE EAST PLANE, A DISTINCT REALIST.

5 MAY 1981Z DD/GFE